

Remarks/Arguments:

Claims 5, 9, 11, 16-18, 25-28, 30-34, 79-82, 84, 85, and 91-93 are pending in the above-identified application. By the present Amendment, claims 17, 25-27 and 93 are canceled, and claims 18 and 28 are amended.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 17, 25, 26, and 93 were rejected as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,321,264 to Fletcher et al. ("Fletcher"). Claims 17, 25, 26, and 93 have been cancelled. The cancellation of such claims is for the purpose of expediting allowance of the present application. Applicants do not agree or concede that such claims are anticipated by Fletcher and such cancellation is without prejudice to Applicants' filing of a continuation application directed to such cancelled claims. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of these claims under 35 U.S.C. § 102 be withdrawn.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claim 27 was rejected as allegedly being unpatentable over Fletcher. Claim 27 has been cancelled. The cancellation of claim 27 is for the purpose of expediting allowance of the present application. Applicants do not agree or concede that claim 27 is unpatentable over Fletcher and such cancellation is without prejudice to Applicants' filing of a continuation application directed to such cancelled claim. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claim 27 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 be withdrawn.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Office Action, at page 4, item 6, indicates that claims 18 and 28 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form by including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. By the present Amendment, claims 18 and 28 are amended to place them in independent form by including all of the limitations of their respective base claims from which these amended claims had depended.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully assert that claims 18 and 28 are in condition for allowance which action is respectfully requested.

Appln. No.: 09/863,593
Amendment Dated: March 7, 2008
Reply to Office Action of: September 7, 2007

NIK-100US

Conclusion

In view of the amendments and remarks set forth above, the above-identified application is in condition for allowance, which action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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The Director is hereby authorized to charge or credit Deposit Account No. **18-0350** for any additional fees, or any underpayment or credit for overpayment in connection herewith.

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